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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001387

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: REFORMIST PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRANT LEARNS THE
POLITICAL GAME

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) Summary: In a November 1 conversation with Consul General, reformist presidential aspirant Pat Utomi said he had been making the campaign rounds. Utomi was optimistic about teaming with Lagos State Governor Bola Tinubu and Tinubu's new party, Action Congress (AC). Utomi was traveling to Abuja and other points north in search of support from Vice President Atiku and other key political figures, including former head of state Buhari. As Utomi advances in his presidential bid, the reformer must now determine how far into power politics can he wade without becoming immersed. In the tundra that goes for politics here, the deals Utomi may have to cut to secure a level of political and financial support to make him a serious contender would almost assuredly be of such a quality as to dilute his reformist drive. End summary.

Reformist Candidate Makes Campaign Rounds

¶2. (C) In a November 1 conversation with Consul General at the Lagos airport, presidential aspirant Pat Utomi voiced optimism about his relationship with Lagos State Governor Bola Tinubu and Tinubu's party, Action Congress (AC). He had good talks with Tinubu and senior AC national executive members. Tinubu and these senior party members seemed receptive and accommodating to him as a reformist candidate, Utomi claimed. Utomi was traveling to Abuja to seek out Atiku. Utomi also planned to visit newly-installed Sultan of Sokoto Mohamed Sa'ad Abubakar and former head of state Muhammadu Buhari to shore up his northern base.

Striking Deals With Key Players

¶3. (C) Utomi laid out his strategy for securing Atiku's support. Utomi postulated the VP would emerge from his legal and political wrangles with President Obasanjo too weak to mount a credible campaign either in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) or the AC, he affirmed. At the same time, Lagos State Governor Bola Tinubu has little chance of emerging as candidate from the AC, given the improbability of another Yoruba succeeding President Obasanjo, Utomi argued. In order to have any chance of succeeding in his presidency bid, Utomi would need a northern running mate. His arrangement with Atiku would involve picking a running mate to Atiku's liking.

¶4. (C) Utomi would also solicit support from Buhari, who harbors presidential ambitions himself. Currently in the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), Buhari may not regain the ANPP

nomination. It appears that a few ANPP governors are outmanoeuvring him in the ANPP infighting. Moreover, President Obasanjo was abetting the anti-Buhari clique in the ANPP to further thwart Buhari's prospects. Utomi laid out to Consul General his proposal to Buhari: both candidates would stay in the ring as long as possible. The unsuccessful aspirant should lay aside party loyalty to support the other should the latter win his party's nomination. Utomi feels this plan would benefit him since he measured his chances of getting the AC nomination as greater than Buhari's of recapturing the ANPP's.

16. (C) In the south east, Utomi is courting All Progressive Grand Alliance (AGPA) leader Chukwuemeka Ojukwu. While Utomi hopes to convince the former Biafran leader that age and literal purblindness should keep him from attempting to ascend the presidential totem, Utomi knows Ojukwu is still a rallying point for much of the Igbo south east. Utomi hopes to persuade Ojukwu not to run and instead, to support fellow Igbo Utomi, thus allowing Ojukwu to keep fidelity with his ethno-centric political philosophy. In exchange, Utomi and the AC would agree to support AGPA candidates for state and local offices in the south east, Utomi projected.

Comment

17. (C) Utomi is a reformist candidate who has a long climb up Disraeli's greasy pole before reaching the top. His thoughts about deal-making with political strongmen suggests the realities of Nigerian politics have been quick to confront him. We think he is being very optimistic about his chances in the AC. Professional politicians like Tinubu and Atiku do not generally relinquish their hard-won political

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opportunities to relative outsiders. However, should he manage to finagle the AC nomination, he could cause a stir in the presidential race. However, if he doesn't bring in some powerbrokers and some money, his will continue to be a quixotic journey.
BROWNE